

Connecting Ayodhya's cultural identity and roots with modernity, the upcoming international airport in the temple town is an amalgamation of modern carbon neutrality concept & ancient Nagara style of architecture



IN THE WINGS

AN AIRPORT GROUNDED IN AYODHYA'S ROOTS

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One of the most high-profile aviation projects in recent times, Ayodhya's Maryada Purushottam Shri Ram International Airport, which is going to be operational soon, amalgamates the modern concept of carbon neutrality with the Nagara style of architecture prevalent in northern India.

"To get inspiration for Ayodhya airport, we visited Hanuman Garhi as its 'shikhar' has vibrant colours, Nageshwar Nath temple, and Chaturbhuj temple which follow Nagara style of architecture. We also went to Ram Ki Paiddi ghat which has a beautiful skyline and stairs. We studied the symbolism associated with such a structure to design the airport terminal," said Vipul Varshney, co-founder of Sthapati, the firm which has designed the airport terminal, spreading across 8,000 sqm area out of the total 13.62 lakh sqm of the airport.

For instance, the 12 columns (pillars) on which the entire load of the airport terminal stands, the head of the pillars, or 'sheersha' bear the weight like a head takes care of a human body. Right below is Deva Gana Patta, the embodiment of divine features which resembles all the good characters of divinity, followed by Gandharva Patta (geometrical band) which basically represents 'vajra' (indestructibility) and 'padma kulika' (probability of moksha for all human beings).

"We have tried to connect the airport with Ayodhya's cultural identity and roots. The air-

port's design doesn't compete with Ram temple, which also has been built on Nagara style of architecture, but it complements the temple," added Vipul. One can find depictions of all seven 'kaands' of the Ramayana on the front columns of the terminal, as well as upside down 3D 'turan dawars' inspired by Jain temple at the entrance.

The Lucknow-based architectural firm took about two and a half months to conduct a ground survey of Ayodhya, went through old literature and history of the temple town, before coming up with the airport's design. Before Ayodhya airport, the firm - which specializes in designing healthcare projects and institutional buildings - has designed airport terminals in Jammu, Jodhpur, Leh and Imphal.

Vipul's son, Harsh Varshney (32), one of the key designers of the project worked with his wife Khushboo Bansal to introduce the modern carbon neutrality concept in the airport.

"We have replaced stone with glass reinforced concrete (GRC). The columns are made of glass reinforced concrete which has been bolted to a steel frame to reduce weight and 70% carbon footprint," Harsh said, adding: "Ayodhya airport is the first airport project in which GRC has been used on a

large scale for façade." With peak-hour capacity of more than 750 passengers and four aircraft movements per hour, Ayodhya airport, a two-storeyed structure, is adorned with elevational elements depicting the sacred city's rich history. The ground floor invites pas-



sengers with expansive amenities, and the airport operations are carried out from the first floor.

Coming up at a cost of Rs 250 crore, the building is inspired by gradual elevation of 'mandaps' and the Nagara style of temple architecture. The airport helps with better connectivity across India and is specifically designed to enhance the experience of visitors and devotees while reflecting Ayodhya's heritage. Harsh said that though the airport has its own solar plant, the building has been designed to ensure that it receives maximum natural light and receives least energy consumption.

"The airport's design doesn't compete with Ram temple, which also has been built on Nagara style of architecture, but it complements the temple"
-Vipul B Varshney | CITY ARCHITECT & URBAN PLANNER

FAÇADE

Roof in the proposal is inspired from the gradual elevation of the mandapas in the proposal for Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, planned in the Nagara style of temple architecture prevalent in northern India



A GLIMPSE OF THE RAMAYANA ERA

The mega columns supporting the terminal roof depict various episodes and characters of the Ramayana. The 'khandika', symbolising impermanence, co-exists with the Deva Gana Patta, embodying divine features



DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

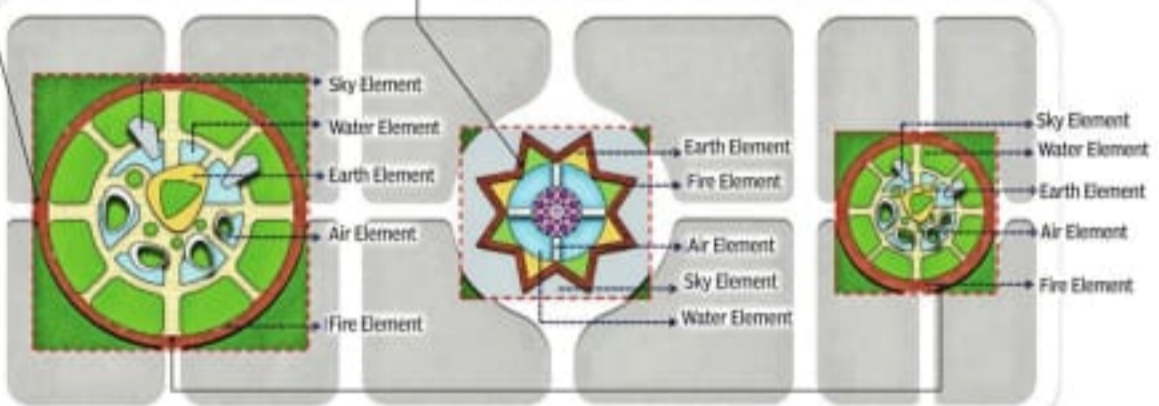
Ayodhya is a spiritual and traditional city and a 'mandala' is a symbol of the universe for Hindus. 'Mandalas' are used in a modern way in landscape design as it means to focus, visualize and to assist the seeker or traveller along his path

GEOMETRIC SHAPED MANDALA

It is used in side divisions of landscaped area that represent the five principal activities and the five elements of earth, water, sky, fire and air. Blue colour represents water element, yellow represents earth element, white colour depicts the element of air. Grey colour represents the element of sky while red colour represents fire

ELEMENT MANDALA

It is used in the centre of landscape as lotus represents growth and connection, whereas blue colour represents the element of water. Yellow colour represents earth, white represents air element. Similarly, grey colour depicts sky while red colour represents the element of fire



SIGNIFICANCE OF COLUMN DESIGN: INSPIRED FROM NAGARA ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

SHEERASHA

Head capital of a pillar | Represents how important sheersha is in bearing weight, like the head takes care of a human body

DEVA GANA PATT

Embodiments of divine features | Resembles all the good characters of divinity

KUMBHIKA / PURNAKUMBHA

Kalasa | Water pot at the top

KRITIMUKHA PATT

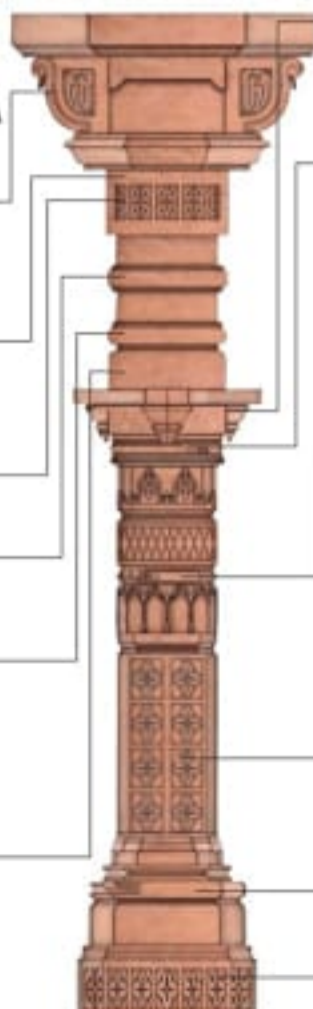
Kritimukha is the embodiment of dedication to Mahadev

GANDHARVA PATT

Geometrical band basically Vajra or Padma Kulika, are present. Vajra indicates indestructibility. Padma Kulika indicates probability of moksha for all human beings

KHANDIKA / GHANTA PATT

Bell band | Signifies impermanence, transient creation of this universe through sound



KALIKA PATT

Lotus bud band indicates the potentiality of every human being to attain moksha

AVATARA PATT

Manifestation band | Different avatars of presiding deity

VADAKA / VADAKI PATT

Musicians band | Singing in reverence of the god

DWARAPALA PATT

Guardian band | Guardians of the presiding deity in the temple are present

SIMHAMUKHA PATT

Lion band | Represents valour and courage

GHATA / AHVAANA PATT

Base water pot like kalasa | Welcome band generally contains Sri Ganesha or Sri Maha Lakshmi

THE MEGA COLUMNS SUPPORTING THE TERMINAL ROOF OF THE PROPOSAL DEPICT THE EPISODES OF RAMAYANA

Design: Annant Pal



INTEGRATION OF AYODHYA'S HERITAGE

At the main entrance of the airport, a grand stepped 'shikhar', adorned with brass, stands tall. This architectural masterpiece, outlined with scriptures, presents a majestic welcome to passengers. The city's heritage and story unfold through intricate columns, each laden with profound symbolism. The mega columns supporting the terminal roof depict various episodes and characters of the Ramayana. The 'khandika', symbolising impermanence, coexists with the Deva Gana Patta, embodying divine features. Every column narrates a story of dedication, courage, and spirituality, weaving the city's essence into the very fabric of the airport



SYMBOLISM IN MURALS & ARTWORK

The terminal building serves as a canvas to display profound messages. The 'bow and arrow mural' symbolises the courage to confront untruth, while hexagonal light particles embody the eternal triumph of truth. From arrivals to skylights, artworks intricately depict the timeless tale of Lord Ram from the Ramayana, creating an immersive, sensory-rich experience beyond traditional airport designs. Strategically placed skylights serve as guiding beacons, enhancing wayfinding and offering a sensory experience for passengers



ENVIRONMENTALLY CONSCIOUS DESIGN

Embracing carbon neutrality with eco-conscious GRC material, the design pioneers sustainable practices in aviation. Ornamental work, meticulously crafted in glass fiber reinforced concrete after extensive research and technical precision, replaces traditional stone and significantly contributes to environmental sustainability, resulting in substantial carbon emission reductions compared to traditional sandstone facades

BOOSTING LOCAL, NATIONAL CONNECTIVITY

Anticipating a surge in tourism, the Ayodhya airport's passenger terminal accommodates 150 arrivals and departures simultaneously. The airport is poised to transcend the ordinary, mirroring the cultural opulence of Ayodhya and redefining contemporary airports to authentically embody the city's identity. The airport is strategically designed to further develop Ayodhya as one of the world's largest pilgrimage centres, providing seamless connectivity and making the journey to Ayodhya accessible and enriching for pilgrims